

In the Specification:

Please amend the specification as shown:

Please delete the paragraph on page 11, lines 19-25, and replace it with the following paragraph:

***In situ* PCR amplification and detection of HBV RNA.** Reactions were carried out according to the protocol described in Liu et al., (1997; J. Vir. 71:4079) except that HBV specific sequences for primers and probe were used. The sequences for these is as follows:

HBV A: 5'-TGCCTGAGTGC(TA)GTATG-3' (SEQ ID NO: 1)

HBV B: 5'-TAGGAGGCTGTAGGCAT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 2)

HB Probe: 5'-TTTATAAGGGTCGATGTCCAT-3' (SEQ ID NO: 3)